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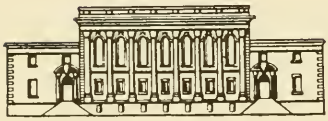

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THE CHANGING CONCEPTIONS OF DEATH IN ENGLISH LITERATURE FROM THE THIRTEENTH TO THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

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INTRODUCTION

Fear and "drede" guided men's lives in the Middle Ages. Christianity had effectively instilled the fear of Judgment Day into its followers, and in return men worked to uphold a morality worthy of eternal beatitude. In the thirteenth century, this fear began to stray from its rigid orientation on Doomsday, and a distinct fear of death itself eclipsed it as the reality of death became more vivid. Whereas Satan was "þat fend, þat foule þing" in an early thirteenth century ubi sunt lyric, Death is the "privee theef" and the "false traytour" in Chaucer's "Pardoner's Tale." What occurred essentially was a change in emphasis on death as a consolation for life's ills and a rebirth to death as an end, a malign force stealing lives away from men. Men grieved over death's carnage and the loss of friends, allowing their passions to overtake reason in the face of death. Ecclesiastics admonished men not to grieve over physical death, for the body is the soul's burden, but to grieve over spiritual death and any fear they may have for the soul's fate at the moment of death. In the English literary and visual representations from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century, one sees the traditional spiritual emphasis on death as a natural passage to the "real life" in eternity being reinforced with increasing urgency into a new underlying trend towards realism. The Middle Ages witnessed a growing concern

for the fate of the individual and his worldly identity. Ultimately, a sense of the Christian framework was never completely lost. The fate of one's soul was a primary concern for man. Even so, this period reveals an attempt to incorporate the human fear of death into a larger spiritual framework.

In studying death in the Middle Ages, one must keep in mind that the themes in literature and in the visual arts served primarily a didactic purpose. They are often less indicative of what man actually believed than what man was supposed to believe. Yet, the trends in what man actually accepted and practiced can be seen most clearly in studying the poets' or the artists' treatments of these themes. For instance, almost all lyricists between the thirteenth and the fifteenth century will expound that the world is fleeting and vain, that eternal life is found through God, and that death itself must not be dreaded, but rather the consequences of sin after death. Yet, why does the thirteenth century express death in terms of Judgment Day? Or why does the fourteenth century personify it as a raging, semi-decomposed female corpse draped in a cloak reaping and levelling humanity? And, why do the fifteenth century representations portray a grimacing skeleton interrupting life to lead men by the hand to the grave? Why does death become the "Port of Peace" again under medieval humanism? What innovative diction, tone, or imagery does the lyricist employ to convey these changes? The answers to such questions reveal the conceptual changes much more accurately than the themes themselves do, for in this era most themes were

predetermined and standard.

Before studying any of the specific attitude changes towards death evolving in the thirteenth century, one must understand the mentality from which they emerged. The medieval mind perceived every person, every object, and every action as part of a divine plan. One began and ended in God. Life on Earth was a gift from God to man just as life in the eternal was God's merciful gift to penitent man. Man relied both on the Church and God to lead him righteously through the passage between these two lives: death (Strayer, vol. 4, 118).* Life on Earth was a minute portion of man's existence, for it was merely a toilsome and, gratefully, transient trial before God ultimately would judge the soul's eternal fate. The anonymous author of The Tower, a fourteenth-century mystical work, expounds well the Christian philosophy of death:

> Death is the running brook that departed from life. Death is on this half, and life on the other half.... But the wise men of this world call this death life, and the death, that these good men call the beginning of life, they clepen the end. (Comper, 196)

Death was the soul's instantaneous abandonment of the body and the world. Man realized his ephemeral nature and understood, through Christian teaching, that his flesh was refuse, not to be valued or futilely pampered as it was "fukul bon" and "salt in horþe wonien & wormes þe to-cheuen" (Brown, 13th C. Lyrics, 31). This belief may seem

* While this source did not present any new ideas, it did organize the ideas in a way helpful to making the thoughts clearer in this paper.

contradictory to the common medieval practice of preserving body parts, particularly those of the saints, in reliquaries or to the mandatory rites of burial for Christians (again, primarily for High Churchmen and kings). In this sense, the body was viewed, particularly by St. Augustine, as a potential vehicle for God's miracles, as the Holy Spirit did at one time inhabit it. They trusted that miraculous powers could remain within the flesh (Strayer, vol. 4, 119).

Man accepted his ephemerality less and less stoically in the next centuries. Ecclesiastics justified man's sufferings on Earth, giving consolation that those who endure hardship on Earth will find rest in heaven. A thirteenth-century English lyric admonishes:

> Drezy here, man, þenne if þou wilt
> A witel pine þat me þe bit,
> Wiþdrau þine eyses ofte,
> þey þi pine be oun-rede;
> And þou þinke on i mede
> Hit sal þe þinken softe. (Brown, 13th C. Lyrics, 85, ll. 25-30)

Fear of damnation humbled man before God, for he was acutely conscious of humanity's collective guilt due to the concupiscence inherited from the peccatum originale. In a fourteenth-century lyric the poet expresses this self-deprecation before God and emphasizes the futility of pride in a doomed world:

> Wrecche mon, wy artou proud,
> þat art of herth i-maked?
> hadyr ne browtestou no schroud,
> bot pore þou come & naked.
> Wen þi woule is faren out,
> þi body with erthe y-raked,
> þat body þat was so ronk and loud,
> Of alle men is i-hated. (Brown, 14th C. Lyrics, 237)

Because the Christian death is, thus, inherently the death of a sinner, the moment of death is crucial to an individual's fate. Death is a precious moment of sleep as the soul awaits Christ and the angels to bid it to heaven. Demons of temptation, the most powerful and dangerous being Unbelief, invade the dying man's chamber in order to obstruct the passage to God and make the soul's salvation even more deserved and admirable. Man must die well. That is, he must die with acceptance, joyous to be leaving an existence of vanity for the beatitude of God. Death was considered a gracious act of God, a last chance for man to do penance for his sins and to absolve all evil from his soul. Christians have always emphasized the beneficial aspects of death by pointing to the prototypical death found in Christ who triumphed over death. The artistic representations in the mid-fourteenth century, around the time of the Black Death, exhibit a vigorous reassertion of Christ's noble and miraculous victory (Strayer, vol. 2, 266).

Although grief and mourning were inevitable parts of the reality of death, only in the later Middle Ages can one begin to sense an open hostility towards Death as a malign entity. Earlier, one sees instead an expression of a regret for this life, a contemptus mundi spirituality. The lyrics exude pathos towards a world that beguiles man into sin with its beauties only to offer the threat of eternal damnation. Life in this world is illusory and deceitful, and it makes no attempt to direct man towards his true life in the eternal. The ubi sunt theme conveys a similar regret in this thirteenth-

century lyric with its elegaic, yet admonishing, tones:

> Eten and drounken and made hem glad;
> Hoere lif was al wiþ gamen I-lad,
> Men kenelden hem biforen,
> þey beren hem wel swiþe heye -
> And in a twincling of on eye
> Hoere soules weren forloren.
>
> Were is þat lawing and þat song,
> þat trayling and proude ȝong,
> þo hauekes and þo houndes?
> Al þat ioye is went away,
> þat wele is comen to weylawey,
> To manie harde stoundes. (Brown, 13th C. Lyrics, 85, ll. 7-18)

The lyricist personifies evil in earthly activity, not in death. Life is a continuum towards death, and the signs of old age are consequently equated with spiritual maturation. A metaphor comparing man during his existence on Earth to a spiritual child developed from this idea. In the fourteenth-century lyric, "Think on Yesterday," the poet compares a child trying to catch a shadow to man trying in vain to grasp this world and yesterday:

> I have wist, sin I cuþe meen,
> þat children ha þi candel liht
> Heor schadewe on þe wal i-sen
> And Ronne þer-after al þe niht;
> Bisy a-boute þei han ben
> To cacchen hit with al heore miht,
> And whon þei cacchen hit beste wolde were,
> Sannest hit schet out of heor siht;
> þe schadewe caccen þei ne hiht,
> For no lynes þat þei couþe lay
> þis schadewe I may likne a-riht
> To þis world and ȝusterday. (Brown, 14th C. Lyrics, 146, ll. 21-32)

Such poems as the above are evidence that medieval man was not always ideally focused on the Christian eternal. Although the Church urged men to welcome death, the ecclesiastics exhorted men to fear death as they chanted

"timor mortis conturbat me" in the Order of the Dead service. In order to uphold its authoritative powers by assuring man's dependency on the Church for salvation and to maintain the supremacy of the Christian doctrine, the Church employed fear tactics. Death was to be feared not as an end in itself as it often is today, but as the last possible chance to redeem good moral standing before God. The clergy exalted and emphasized God's supreme role as Judge over sinners. The Church made the consequence of man's choice of action in life quite clear. The tympana of cathedral portals and the illuminated manuscripts portrayed Christ seated in his throne in the center with the elected souls ordered at his right hand and the damned chaotically burning in hell at his left.

The Church appealed not only through its liturgy and architecture to enter and control the minds of laymen, but also through its actual law. An addition to the Papal Canon of the thirteenth century involved a revolutionary change in the act of confession and can be seen as the initiator of the renewed vigor for absolution at death. Celtic inconsistency and inefficiency in compiling ecclesiastical laws bequeathed the Middle Ages a legacy of decaying authority and incongruous rules regarding confession. Laymen questioned confidentiality, and they often preferred confessing to other men or directly to God. The Church was losing its control over men's consciences. The Fourth Lateran Council met in 1215 to resolve these problems. The result was one of the most important decrees in the Church's history, the Omnis utriusque sexes, which made confession a mandatory duty once a year.

The Church regained its authority over individuals' actions, and it immediately set to work to infuse reminders of death into minds through visual and literary channels (Braswell, 14-15). The memento mori tradition was a tool of anguish to focus Christian eyes on the crucial importance of confession before death. It served further to assure the Church's dominance in society as it was growing corrupt and unstable. As death became more immediate and imminent in the fourteenth century, the memento mori tradition became radically graphic and gruesome in order to accentuate even more fervently the importance of "living well" and "dying well."

Thus, due to the temperament of the Middle Ages, new attitudes towards death began to eclipse traditional ones. Christian theology insisted on the omnipotence and majesty of God the Judge who administered mercy and condemnation. Tones of impending doom in the literature and artistic visions of a threatening gloom soon and certain to come maintained a high level of fear in men. Churches put an emphasis on all of the deceased of the past (ubi sunt) instead of the particular individual through Prayers for the Dead and the construction of chantry chapels around the naves of the cathedrals as memorial offerings (Strayer, vol. 4, 119-20).

These new attitudes, however, became further distorted and colored by the unexpected forces, disease and ideological changes, which remolded the medieval world in the fourteenth century. For instance, from the graphic portrayals of decomposed corpses intending to shock and to evoke horror there actually grew a lugubrious fascination with the powers of Death. Death

became familiar, and man played with its ghoulish image. Significant changes in the theme of death appear as one delves into the later Middle Ages. The conceptions of God and death and man's relationship with them will alter drastically. These changes often diverge from the Christian path, but as mentioned before, one sees the heightened fervor with which Christian notions will be reasserted against these deviations.

CHAPTER ONE

THE GRIM REALITY OF DEATH

When he opened the fourth seal,
I heard the voice of the fourth
living creature say, "Come!"
And I saw, and behold, a pale
horse, and its rider's name was
Death, and Hades followed him;
and they were given power over
a fourth of the earth, to kill
with sword and with famine and
with pestilence and by wild
beasts of the earth.

Revelation 6: 7-9

The reality of death came to the forefront of medieval lives in a series of tragedies in the fourteenth century. The thirteenth century had been concerned with spiritual death as the Church reinforced the harrowing consequences of an impenitent death. This concern intensified into actual necromania in the fourteenth century as famine, earthquakes, and pestilence deracinated lives in a swift and unpredictable course. Time grew precious and men, more than ever before, had to keep an attentive and constant guard over their actions in order to maintain sound moral standing. An acute sense of change, instability, and helplessness pervades the lyrics:

For nou hit is and nou hit nis,
þer may no mon þer-inne affy.
Hit chaungeþ so ofte & so sodeynly,
Today is her to-morwe a-way - (Brown, 14th C. Lyrics, 144, ll. 31-

Men had to be prepared for death at all times, for the blow of death's scythe could strike at any moment. A heightened urgency to "do well" in life can be felt in the literature and the visual arts of this period.

In the thirteenth century, the emphasis is on dying, on the moment itself where the flesh is abandoned by the liberated soul. While the body is conceived as being governed by its senses and physical needs, and consequently being responsible for the willfull actions of man, the soul is the fruition of the good or evil natures of these actions. Dying is represented as a gradual, calm process. When personified, Death is a gracious savior who "leads" or "brings" man away from the wretched, worldly life. The portrait of this death is vague, and he is given little character. He is seen both as a footman and as an escort, for man is dying from the minute he is born. Death "luteth in his swo" or leads him by the hand to the grave. Most of the thirteenth-century visual representations, however, still speak of death in relation to the afterlife. The symmetry of hell and heaven, the damned and the elected, served to direct men towards a "good death." (Figure 1)

The lyric "Death's Wither-Clench" captures the thirteenth-century philosophy of death while still introducing fresh images and trying to create a character in death in order to stress its reality and certainty. The personifications of death at this time are, however, more or less those of death's attributes rather than the full characterization found in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The poet warns man to repent his sins, to "wel do, wel þench" before "fair weather turns to rain" so that he may find "sunshine" in the eternal world:

Man, þer þu falle of þi bench,
þu sinne a-quench. (Brown, 13th C. Lyrics, 15, ll. 9-10)

The poet chooses the familiar image of drinking in a tavern to convey universality, for all men "sel drinke of deth-is drench." Man must realize that he will end as he began - in filth:

Man hwi neltu þe bisen?
of felthe þu ert isowe,
weirmes mete þu selt ben. (ll. 32-35)

The image of the flesh as worm's meat is popular in the lyrics of this period. In this one humbling image, the reader can visualize the repulsive putrefaction of the body, and he can sense the vanity of his finite existence on Earth. Another lyric expresses this image in worldly terms to make death even more concrete:

Whan the turf is thy tour
And thy put is thy bour,
Thy fel and thy white throte
Shullen wormes to note.
What helpeth thee than
Al the world wenne? (Stevick, 12)

In "Death's Wither-Clench," death is the executor of God's will. He is not vindictive or evil, but has the authority to pierce and deflate human pride and earthly prosperity. In one sense, he is God's messenger against evil. When death comes to a neighbor's door it is a memento mori sent from God to men to force them to focus on the Last Judgment.

Wela-wey! deth þe sal dun þrowen
þar þu wenest heye ste.
In wo sal þi wele enden,
in wo þi gle. (11. 37-40)

Death casts down sinners, not in a hostile, aggressive manner, but rather in the sense that simply in coming to them he opens the way to eternal Hell. The poet scorns sinners for their weakness of being easily distracted from the virtuous Christian life. A true Christian should not allow death to be victorious, for if a dying person is confidently prepared to "die well" he can triumph over death. He should feel comfortable with death as it is a salvation and a step closer to God. Death destroys the sinners and those that value this world too highly, not the virtuous.

Two personal approaches to death can be seen in the thirteenth-century lyric "Le Regret de Maximian" and in the similar fourteenth-century lyric "An Old Man's Prayer." Both men, Maximian and Middlelerd in the latter, have reached old age, and in retrospect, they contemplate their former beauty and strengths with regret and woe. They look and yearn for death, and they beseech him to put an end to their cheerless existence. Maximian feels that he has lived too long as his "wele is went to wo."

To wepen and to wone,
To makien muchele mone
Al me hit deþ for nede. (Brown, 13th C. Lyrics, 93, 11. 43-45)

He has little left but his soul, for he has no strength to socialize or to do his daily chores. He can no longer fulfill his worldly obligations as his physical ability "is ago."

Even his wife wearies of him, complaining that he simply wastes bread:

> Reuþfoul is mi reed;
> Hoe make me selden fled,
> Mi wif þat sholde be.
> Of me hoe is al seed,
> Hoe sai ich waste breed.
> Mine frend me mulle I-se. (ll. 250-62)

He yearns for "niȝt," for rest. He wants bitterly to send his soul on its way to the better life:

> Ich mourne & sike sore
> For I ne may be namore
> Mon as ich wes þu;
> So crafti clerc of lore,
> So godlich ounder gore,
> And alhit is ago. (ll. 145-50)

> Ich wolde ich were on rest,
> We lowe lieid on a chest,
> Mi blisse is al forlore. (ll. 202-04)

Maximian's death is a "good death." On his death bed, he is "of glade chere" and "of spech bold." He reviews his life of activity, his hunts and his riches, with tones of regret. He recognizes that at one point in his life he was proud of his worldly possessions. His "last luitel stound," his fairness, beauty, and strength have all fled, as do all things of this life:

> Mi main þat was so strong,
> Mi·middle smal and long,
> I-brout hit is to grounde. (ll. 97-99)

From the pain he experiences in seeing the sad, lowly state of his former youth he yearns despairingly: "Deþ iche wolde fawe." (l. 199) Death is the panacea for his regrets and misery.

In "An Old Man's Prayer," Middlelerd is similarly being torn apart by the ravages of sin and old age. Like Maximian, he entreats "Dredful deþ" to set him free before his "herte brekeþ a-tuo!"

> Dredful deþ, why wolt þou dare
> brying þis body þat is so bare
> ant yn blae ybounde?
> Careful mon ycast in care,
> y falewe as flour y-let for fare,
> ychabbe myn deþes wounde. (Brown, 14th C. Lyrics, 6, ll. 86-91)

Middlelerd's treatment of his sorrows is more pathetic, in the strictest sense, than Maximian's. The Seven Deadly Sins, personified in the poem, have overtraken him cruelly in life. He could not escape "glotonie," "prude," "lecherie," "coveytise," "niþe," "lyare" or "sleuthe." Middlelerd presents himself as helpless against a tyrannical world permeated by evil. He tearfully asks God how much longer he must be subjected to this torture.

> Euel ant elde ant oþer wo
> foleweþ me so faste
> Me þunkeþ myn herte brekeþ a-tuo!
> suete god, whi shal hit swo?
> hou mai hit lengore laste? (ll. 47-53)

Middlelerd is, also, more bitter towards death itself than Maximian, for he views death as a sadistic force which watches men deteriorate and become useless, and then "lurks in concealment," refusing to extricate man from his miseries.

Richard Rolle, a fourteenth-century mystic, expresses in his writings a similar personal longing for death. He seeks death as an escape from what he finds as a godless world. For him, death is a new life. He poses a question

similar to Middlelerd's:

> Oh, Death, where dwellest thou?
> Why comest thou so late to me,
> living but yet mortal?... Who is
> enough to think thy sweetness, that
> art the end of sighing, the beginning of
> desire, the gate of unfailing yearning?
> Thou art the end of heaviness, the mark
> of labours,the beginning of fruits,
> the gate of joys. (Comper, 194)

He implores death to come to him with almost a physical, passionate zeal:

> Behold I grow hot and
> desire after thee! (194)

While Maximian and Middlelerd concentrate on the worldly implications of their deaths and express love for death as a liberator from the pains of loss, Rolle concentrates on the ressurrection that follows death. Rolle views death as a "sweetness," "a best beloved," "heavenly music," whereas Maximian and Middlelerd resent its belated arrival. Rolle asserts that man

> ... should gladly suffer all
> that happens and should think
> on death, not with bitterness
> but with sweetness. (194)

The reason for these differences in attitude is quite obvious. Maximian and Middlelerd lived and communicated closely with the world whereas Rolle, a mystic priest, led a more secluded, ascetic life. In other words, common man could not distance himself from the worldly temptations very easily. It is a struggle to maintain a spiritual perspective in a world that offers distractions from it.

Thus, the thirteenth-century lyrics convey a sense of an individual, yet impersonal, relationship with death. Morality was a man's own responsibility, and death sized him up as an individual. Physical death was stressed as inevitable so that the true concern for spiritual death, that death lurking behind Sin, could be more salient. For instance, one sees the Seven Deadly Sins, not death, personified in these lyrics. Death grasps each man with a "wither-clench" and he lurks in each man's shoe. There is no sense of mass slaughter, but only of the death and Judgment of the individual soul. Death is an abstract concept as each man senses him in a different way, and he is given no concrete, personal character. With such a background and such an acute sense of Judgment, it is no wonder that the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries panicked when they began to sense that their souls were vulnerable at every moment to death and could be next in line before God for his verdict of Heaven or Hell.

This abstract and impersonal conception of death changed as man's consciousness of death's imminence sharpened. The Black Death swept through Europe from 1347-1351, and a marked change in the treatment of death in literature and art followed. A backdrop of famine and earthquakes augmented the horror of the plague. "Verses on the Earthquakes of 1382" describes the imminent disasters:

> Þe Rysing of Þe comynes in londe,
> Þe Pestilens, and Þe eorÞe-quake -
> Þeose Þreo Þinges, I vndersonde,
> Beo-tokenes Þe grete vengaunce & wrake
> Þat schulde falle for synnes sake,
> As Þis Clerkes conne de-clare. (Brown, 14th C. Lyrics, 188, ll. 56-6[illegible]

Disaster and pandemonium deracinated men's lives and left them helpless. Everyone sensed the impending doom as pessimism, austerity, and darkness invaded society. The plague was God's vengeance and his "warnying to beware." In the Decameron, there is no question for Boccaccio that the plague's source is supernatural and, for him, invincible:

> It started in the East, either because of the influence of heavenly bodies or because of God's just wrath as a punishment to mortals for our wicked deeds, and it killed an infinite number of people.... And against this pestilence no human wisdom or foresight was of any avail. (3)

The Black Death caused a new awareness of nature's strengths and a new sensitivity to the supernatural. The distinction between the natural and supernatural became, in a sense, even more obscured. The power in control over lives now was one which seemed to differ from the traditional conception of divinity (Strayer, vol. 2, 267). This invisible force gave no warning of its strikes which were only made visible in the masses of dead bodies. This force was Death in their eyes; thus, men began to lash out with hostility at this evil intruder. Death was approaching too quickly and too rampantly, not too slowly as with Maximian and Middlelerd.

The reactions to the Black Death were as many as there were individuals. Some people adopted an Epicurean, carpe diem approach to life, some became extremely introverted and depressed. Neither reaction would have been advocated by the Church, for each abandoned the Christian view of death

as a natural and good passage. The Epicureans were ignoring and ignoring death, and the depressed were allowing death to conquer them. As for religion, there were two conflicting reactions: some men intensified their piety in a sense of panic and some rebelled against the authority of the Church. Similarly, some men's sensitivity and charity to others increased, as did their mourning for the loss of friends, while some men pathetically lost all sense of community and commitment. For those who drifted away from the Church, the sense of religion grew increasingly individualistic and autonomous. The Church weakened from within itself as well. Because Death knew no prejudice, the monastic population diminished greatly. In England, fatality in the monastic orders exceeded that in the lay population, fifty-one percent to fifteen percent (Strayer, 266). Curiously, however, the Church reached its financial apogée in the fourteenth century. The economic phenomenon of high labor wages and extremely low commodity prices, because of the extent of human loss, caused an influx of money into the Church's hands. The surviving ecclesiastics hurried to hoard the excess monies from the hands of laymen by using tools of guilt (Strayer, 266). However, the majority of people tended to reject a corrupt Church and turned to themselves in response. The whole picture of the various reactions to the Black Death seems confused and contradictory and, ironically, those adjectives depict the atmosphere most precisely.

The overt fear and hatred of Death (now with a capital 'D') can be illustrated best by the re-emergence

of Christ's victory over death. In the oppressive atmosphere of the plague there was a need to instill hope in men by reasserting the positive Christian theme of man's ability to confront death just as Christ did. Christ conquered mortality. A Christ-like approach, however, proved especially difficult as Death came so unexpectedly, so cruelly, and so haphazardly that men could only feel bewildered, not triumphant. Because Death was such a "democratic" force, moral standards often slackened as well. Whether one upheld a virtuous life or not no longer seemed to matter. The reassertion of the redemptive powers of virtue in Christ was an attempt to draw men's focus back into the spiritual framework. The immortality of one's soul was reemphasized. A fifteenth-century Italian philosopher, Nicolas da Cusa, in his Unity and Reform, expresses this veneration of Christ.

> ... it was fitting that human nature should be led to the triumph of immortality by no way but by a victory over death. He underwent this death in order that with Him human nature might rise to eternal life and that animal and body might be rendered spiritual and incorruptible. As true man He needs be mortal, nor could He convey mortal nature into immortality but in crushing mortality by death. (da Cusa, 76)

The cross now represented the ideal approach to death as well as life.

The Church reasserted Christ's triumph not only as a consolation for man, but because there was a direct correlation between the weakness of the Church and the urgency of its

assertions of the memento mori. The Church wanted to curb the hedonistic reaction to the plague in order to redirect men back under its roof. Thus, the artists prolifically crafted graphic and gruesome visual portrayals of Death to reiterate the eternal consequences of sin. Not only was Death portrayed as a skeletal figure, but as an old, decaying woman with hair of serpents and bird-like feet, draped in a black shroud. She flies imposingly above the Earth slaughtering her victims with a scythe (Figure 2) (Strayer, vol. 2, 266). The goal of the artists was grotesqueness. The character and personality that the artists increasingly try to create in Death marks the turn this art will take nearer the fifteenth century to become almost an obsessive fascination. During the plague, a popular representation presents a skeleton, Death, riding quickly on horseback with an arrow, a coffin, and a shovel (Figure 3). This portrayal reveals both the traditional and the popular strains in interpreting the memento mori. Not only is Death the fourth horseman of the Apocalypse in the Book of Revelation, but he also recalls the becchini, the gravediggers who, during the Black Death, were commonly seem on horseback picking up and carrying the bodies "as fast as they could [to] whatever unoccupied grave they could find" (Boccaccio, 7-8).

Thus, the imminence of death, both in reality and in the arts, gave men the added incentive to defy this world and to want to live longer. It is a human reaction for man to want to retaliate against something that imposes itself upon his life or his property. In contrast, the less one sees death, the

less one realizes his mortality, and now that death was everywhere, men felt doomed. The literature of this period urgently exhorts men to ignore life and think on death in order to save them from neglecting their soul, for "O Vanyte off Vanytes & all is vanité" (Brown, 15th C. Lyrics, 238, l. 1)

The new realism of death in literature can be illustrated by one interesting fourteenth-century addition to the traditional theme of the "foes of mankind." In the thirteenth century, such lyrics were entitled "Man Must Fight Three Foes," the flesh, the world, and the devil. In the fourteenth century, it becomes "The Four Foes of Mankind" as death is added. Death comes to take men now. He is no longer the natural leader of the living to the grave, for "stilly deþ wol on him stele." Few men lived to see death by old age or natural causes. Death had an "unnatural" source in the plague. It was an exterior force which struck suddenly, not a gradual, degenerative process. Death was, thus, given an unnatural character, and it was in this change that these portrayals broke with the previous emphasis on death as a natural passage to the afterworld or as a natural companion throughout life. "The Four Foes of Mankind" begins:

> When derne deþ ous haþ ydiȝt,
> Is non so war no so wiȝt
> þat he no felles him in fiȝt,
> As fire dos in tunder. (Brown, 14th C. Lyrics, 32, ll. 49-52)

Death "prickes & prokes" and "pykes his pray." He is injurious:

Deþ þat deries ous ȝete
& makes many wonges wete.
þer nis no liif þat he wil lete
To lache when him list. (ll. 65-68)

This poet mourns for the dead, for he exhibits an open regret for the disruption of his worldly ties and relationships. Loss is viewed less and less as inevitable in God's divine plan. Loss is no longer natural, but the result of a thief's actions:

Our gode friendes has he fot,
& put þe pouer to þe pot,
& ouer him y-knett his knott,
Vnder his clay kist. (ll. 73-76)

Death is continually described as "derne deþ," a secret, cunning intruder on life. The lyrics express man's helplessness against Death and his reluctance to sacrifice worldly pleasures and riches even though the fate of his soul depends on it. There is no escape from death, and the characters of Boccaccio's Decameron would be considered foolish in thinking that they can escape it by fleeing to the hills. Avoidance is impossible, an idea that the danse macabre will reinforce in the fifteenth century.

"The Four Foes of Mankind" provides the best example of the fourteenth-century hostility towards Death. This lyric gives Death a realistic characterization as a deceitful, malicious and sadistic fiend. Death, not the devil, is "þe fende" and "fals frende." Death works quickly and hastily in striking his next victim. He makes no delay in beguiling men into putting their trust in him. Man must be vigilant over his actions at all times, for "Sone wil [Death] sunder."

Death does not hold back or wait, but he aggressively "prickes & prokes/ Til he vnclustri al þe lokes/ þat liif ligges vnder" (ll. 57-60). He beats, not knocks, on the door: "deþ dinges o þi dore" (l. 89). He seizes men as he pleases, indifferent to the remorse he engenders.

One of the most remarkable aspects of this lyric is the poet's direct address to Death:

> Derne deþ, o-pon þe ȝong
> Wiþ þe to striue it is strong!
> Y wold be wreken of mi wrong,
> ȝif y way wist. (ll. 77-80)

For the first time in these lyrics one can see man wanting to seek vengeance on Death, to confront this cunning fiend. The lines above exhibit the fourteenth-century tendancy for man to conceive of an exterior embodiment of Death, to distance it as an "unnatural" force. The traditional aspect of these lines, however, lies in the poet's ultimate awareness that Death cannot be predicted or outwitted and that concern for the soul's fate can alone offer men hope. This lyric, also, wonderfully expresses man's increasing reluctance to forsake the things he "has gaderd & y-glened" in this world. The following stanza is not only the most beautiful of the poem by virtue of its alliterative and metrical musicality, but it also exudes personal tones and speaks in quite human terms.

> When þou has gaderd & y-glened,
> Long lyowen & lened,
> Sparely þi gode spened
> & loþ for to lete,
> þe war leuer swelt vnder sword
> þan parti of þi peni hord;
> þou wringest mani wrang word

Wiþ wanges ful wete.
& deþ dinges o þi dore
þat nedes schal be þi neiȝebore,
& fett þe to fen-fore
Foule vnder fete.
For al þe craft þat þou can,
& al þe wele þatow wan,
þe mock & þe mad man
No schul þai neuer mete. (ll. 81-96)

The reserved tones of the thirteenth-century exhortations to "think on death" have evolved into human, honest, and vivid accounts of personal confrontations with the pains of death. In a thirteenth-century lyric one would probably not find a lyricist depicting a man, who had fallen under the blow of the sword, screaming "mani wrang [morally astray] word/ Wit wanges ful wete." Nevertheless, the stanza concludes by confirming the impossibility to escape death. It is interesting to note that escape is not in terms of fleeing as seen earlier, but rather in terms of "craft" and "wreken," revenge. Man wants to fight Death one-on-one to outwit Death's arrival at his door.

One fourteenth-century lyric which preserves the rather thirteenth-century assumption that death plays a part in the natural process of life is "Esto Memor Mortis." Death is portrayed with a "spiculum," a dart with which he smites men. Despite the lyric's reserved, traditional, prayer-like tone and structure, it contains the fourteenth-century realism and the sense of Death's rapidity.

Caro vermis ferculum þenk on þe pynes of helle;
Mors habet spiculum þat smyteþ man full felle;
Te ponet ad tumulum Tyl domes day to dwelle.
Hic relinquis seculum; þere nys not ellis to telle.
Mors cito cuncta rapit, þerefor man þynk on þy
werkys. (Brown, 14th C. Lyrics, 240, ll. 31-35)

Thus, one can see some interesting and quite different trends in diction and tone in these lyrics. These changes will come into full force as one enters the fifteenth century. Of the three centuries covered in this study, the fifteenth century represents the theme of death most prolifically as Songs of Mortality, Songs of Penitence, Songs of Fortune, Songs of the Decadence of Virtue, and proverbs abound. What one will witness in the fifteenth century will be a split in the literature on death into the popular and the ecclesiastical, resulting from the turmoil of the fourteenth century. The confusion of this period relaxed the strict conceptual and factual framework in which the medieval mind functioned. The fifteenth-century Church, appalled by the enfeebled moral standards of men, reasserted its doctrine with urgency, causing an influx of moralizing literature. In the other strain, the personal tones of lamentation heard in the fourteenth-century lyrics intensified and took the form of elegies. The heightened sensitivity to loss and the more fully developed character of Death embody the most important legacies to the fifteenth century. As the medieval world dissolves under the emergence of new definitions and compromises in conflicting ideology, the relationship between life and death will acquire new dimensions that persist today.

CHAPTER TWO

EGO SUM:

THE TRIUMPH OF DEATH

By the end of the fourteenth century, Death was a certainty and a harsh, vivid reality as he triumphantly heralded "ego sum" (Figure 4). While after the shock of the Black Plague he, rather she, flew above men in a fury to smite humanity (Figure 2), the fifteenth century saw Death descend to earth. Death was standing victoriously with his feet on the ground or on a sepulchral throne, holding a dart as his sceptre (Figure 5). The inevitable triumph of Death was indisputable, and the fourteenth-century rage and severity portrayed in the visual representations were gradually mollified as Death assumed the confident composure of a sovereign king (Figure 6). Death laid down his slaughtering scythe in the fifteenth century and substituted a dart (Figure 7). This substitution alone reflects the growing individualization of Death's approach that will be seen in the fifteenth-century literature and art. In some portrayals, Death, who is actually a dead person, poses as if trying to step closer and reveal to the spectator a profound secret (Figure 8). His grimace suggests a tone of irony, for Death holds the irony of man's existence: man lives, but not for this life. By the turn of the fifteenth century, Death had, thus, plunged from his transcendental heights to become an absolute on the same plane as humanity, mingling with individual lives. Fifteenth-century man was almost neurotically

obsessed with death, and the large amount of literature and art on the subject justifies this assertion.

Death's descent to Earth is important not only as evidence of the move from the earlier vague characterization of death to a more concrete and dramatized characterization, but also as evidence of a change in the conception of Death's relationship to man, and most importantly, as evidence of a shift in his purpose as a memento mori. In fifteenth-century lyrics he retains his character as a "stilly," cunning menace who steals lives at random. Yet, in the fourteenth century Death levelled many men with one strike. Death was a murderous force which indifferently slaughtered masses. This concept changes in the fifteenth century as one can see a reawakening of the thirteenth-century conceptions that had been momentarily eclipsed by the psychological shock of the plague. The image of Death retains its fourteenth-century grotesqueness and shock appeal, yet it returns to its thirteenth-century individual approach to man. However, his approach is no longer impersonal. These conceptions were modified to accommodate a closer relationship between man and his world.

In the fifteenth century, man's sensitivity to his own mortality sharpened. As life was becoming more sophisticated intellectually and socially during this period under the influence of humanism and the Renaissance, man felt a more intimate bond with his world. Consequently, he felt the need to make a mark on the world that would remain after his death. Thus, in the visual and literary arts, there was a growing

concern with the reality of man on Earth, not with his soul at Judgment. Death came to men individually, and one sees an attempt to relate Death to the inner psychology of the individual. The different kinds of death - natural, suicide, old age - even began to be distinguished. Death's one-to-one approach is reminiscent of the thirteenth century, yet then the focus was on what awaits man in the afterlife. The fifteenth-century humanist movement brought in a fresh worldview as it concentrated on man's relationship to his world instead of to God. The Renaissance conception of God, like the conception of death, shifted from being a fact to being an idea (Beaty, 69). No longer was God a judge to torment sinners, but rather an abstraction which communicated with man not through a final judgment, but through moral law on Earth (Beaty, 69). Similarly, Death lost his concreteness in the later English humanist Ars Moriendi texts as he changed from a worldly reality into an object of philosophical discussion. The popular culture, however, never really lost a sense of a visual, horrifyingly real character (Beaty, 69).

In this trend towards the more secular lies an important change in the goal of the memento mori. Death was no longer a tool of anguish to remind men of Judgment, but instead a tool of instruction to teach men how to live on Earth. Man did have a life regardless of its ultimate futility, and he could give this existence meaning by leading a "good life" that would

* In Figure 9 one can see the representation of the secular, worldly identity of man in the face of death. There is no attempt to break the link between man and his world.

make a lasting impression in this world in the form of fame and in the afterlife in the form of salvation. Life was not in vain if based on God's moral law. From a human instead of a spiritual perspective, man finally saw that the way to conquer his mortality was by affirming an identity on Earth. By convincing himself of his immortality on Earth, his worldly exploits seemed less futile and the impact of death and loss, less regretful. The true spiritual lesson for man, however, lay in realizing what parts of his worldly existence make a lasting and substantial mark. Late medieval humanism reflects this desire to live a good life, to make the most of what this world can offer to enhance the spiritual core of man. Under this influence, Death can be more easily accepted as a natural passage and he regains his character as "the Port of Peace," and "the Soul's Friend" in some of the fifteenth-century lyrics. Humanism, thus, tried to resolve the ambiguity between man's religious and secular needs. Never in the medieval era, however, was the sense of divine purpose shattered, even though the doubt and the interest in worldly fruits would seem to indicate otherwise.

In the fifteenth-century literature, two strains appear. First, in the popular literature, Death is "alive" and active, and his character is highly dramatized. Second, in the ecclesiastical literature, the Church vehemently reasserts its traditional views as a reaction against the fourteenth-century conception of Death as an external, unnatural force and , also, as a reaction against the decaying morality of

man. As God says in Everyman:

> I perceive, here in my majesty
> How that all creatures be to me unkind,
> Living without dread in worldly prosperity:
> Of ghostly sight the people be so blind,
> Drowned in sin, they know me not for their God,
> In worldly riches is all their mind,
> They fear not my righteousness, the sharp rod. (207)

In the popular treatments of death, tones of confusion, despair, and ambiguity prevail as men sense the conflict between their human sensitivities to death and their religious commitment to believe in the beneficial aspects of death. In contrast, the tones of the ecclesiastical treatments are authoritative, dogmatic, and certain as the Church has the jurisdiction to clearly dictate what is good and what is evil. While Death was triumphing over man in the visual arts to stress worldly vanity, the Christian texts were asserting man's ability to triumph over Death by "dying well." A moralizing tone binds these two divergent strains, as does a heightened personal approach to death. For, particularly in the ars moriendi literature of the Church, the psychological interpretation of Moriens becomes increasingly important to the manual.

The state of fluctuation beteen the two medieval attitudes towards death had a momentous effect on the literature. Early medieval literature is often accused of as being shallow and stock and too conceptual. In the late fourteenth century and the fifteenth century, the literature adopted personal dimensions to acquire new "perceptual" levels of meaning. The focus shifted away from Christ on the Cross and his triumph over death to Everyman and his ability to

emulate this triumph (Beaty, 45). The rigid otherworldly conceptions dissolved, and the individual perceptions of this world were extolled. The psychological approach to handling the relationship between death and the individual is reflected in this change. Though man's teleological sense persists despite these changes, the reality of "domes-dai" becomes nebulous.

There are some notable fourteenth-century lyrics which anticipate the lasting fifteenth-century concepts, and they should be studied in order to make the fifteenth-century lyrics clearer. Moralization from a personal, human perspective and the direction towards "living well" can be seen in the fourteenth-century lyric "Against My Will I Take My Leave." This lyric expresses the explicit regret to abandon this life, the desire to establish an identity on Earth, and an exhortation to "live well." The poet, a dying man himself (later the vado mori tradition), urges man in the traditional manner to "Beo redi ay to take þi leve," yet he instructs from his own personal experiences. It is one man speaking to another from a human, not necessarily a Christian, perspective:

> Aȝein mi wille al-þauȝ I wende,
> I may not alwey dwellen here;
> For eueri þing schal have an ende,
> And frendes are not ay I-fere;
> Be we neuer so lef and dere,
> Out of þis world al schul we meue,
> And whon we buske vn-to vr bere,
> Aȝeyn vr wille we take vr leve. (Brown, 14th C. Lyrics, 134, ll. 17-24)

The poet dramatically admonishes men to live within the Christian framework "Al sodeynli lest þou be kiht." Death is

conceived as a rapid, killing force here, although the speaker is dying gradually. The most novel aspect of this lyric lies in its ending. While the last stanzas of most early lyrics end with dark images and thundering tones to beseech men to think on the doom of Judgment and Hell, this poem, focusing on "living well," moralizes with a positive, cheerful tone:

> Nou haueþ good dai, gode men alle,
> Haueþ good dai, ȝonge and olde,
> Haueþ good day, boþe grete and smalle,
> And graunt-merci a þousand folde!
> ȝif euere I miȝte ful fayne I wolde
> Don ouȝt þat weore vn-to þow leve;
> Crist kepeþow out of cares colde,
> For nou is tyme to take my leue. (ll. 56-64)

He approaches death calmly and confidently, thankful for having led a good and productive life, not regretful for having had to exist at all in this world.

An idea that the fifteenth century capitalizes on in accentuating the triumph of death is the impossibility for all men - kings, popes, serfs, the wicked or the good - to escape death. The later <u>danse macabre</u> tradition dramatizes this democracy of death. Another aspect of this emphasis on the levelling power of death is the importance for man, both alone and collectively as a part of humanity, to confront death as a reminder of one's transient existence. The fourteenth-century poem "Think on Yesterday" presents the fifteenth-century concept that all men must inescapably "dance with death" (Figures 10-17).

> Socrates seiþ a word ful wys:
> Hit were wel betere for to se
> A mon þat nou parte and dys,

þen a feste of Realte.
þe feste wol make his flesch to ris,
And drawe his herte to vanite;
þe body þat on þe Bere lys,
Schewep þe same þat we schal be.
þat ferful fit may no man fle
Ne wiþ no wiles win hit a-way;
þerfore a-mong al Iolyte,
Sum tyme þenk on ȝusterday. (Brown, 14th C. Lyrics, 148, ll. 85-96)

It is important to notice the poet's use of a dead person, not simply the character Death, as a tool to make men think on death. Notice in Figure 18 how Death has emerged from his grave; thus, he is not the personification of a concept, but a dead man himself. The poet is exhorting men to look at the concrete examples of death all around them, not necessarily to think on an abstract concept. He is urging a personal identification with death.

These two particular fourteenth-century lyrics exemplify the ideas which will be elaborated upon in the fifteenth century: the moralization on and interaction with death on human, not necessarily spiritual, levels. The literature studied from this point on will be the culmination of the medieval cult of death studied thus far. The cultural forces will sometimes clash and sometimes unite in trying to redefine the relationship between life and death.

The titles of the fifteenth-century lyrics themselves reflect the moralizing element, for proverbs and moral sentences blossom at this time: "See Much, Say Little, and Learn to Suffer in Time," "Measure is Best of All Things," "Devouring Death Makes All Unbold," "Who Trusteth Fortune Will Have A Fall," and "Vanitas Vanitatum." The themes of old

age and morality appear most prolifically in the fifteenth century. The primary difference between these exhortations and those of the thirteenth century lies in the dramatization of the moral. The fifteenth century vado mori tradition in the lyrics, alluded to earlier in the fourteenth-century lyric "Against My Will," intensifies man's personal, one-on-one relationship with death, for when spoken from the mouth of a dying man, the moralizations seem more immediate and urgent. While Death continues to be conceived of as a menacing and murderous horror, he gradually begins to be eclipsed by the moriens as more and more of the lyrics are the utterances of a dying or dead man. This shift illustrates the Church's reassertion of death as a natural passage and its attention to the moriens. It also hints to a new humanist attention to the vivens, or those that were once vivens, that will be discussed later in this chapter. Moralization about life and death no longer entirely relied on the Church's strict classification of Right and Wrong, but it became validated as it was spoken from the lips of one who had experienced both life and death.

A perfect example is "The Lament of the Soul of Edward IV." This dramatic monologue of a sinner presents the themes of the world as "a chery fere full of woo" (Brown, 15th C. Lyrics, 251, l. 22), the ephemerality of worldly treasures, the ubi sunt motif, and the image of the "wormys ordeyn þer fleshe for to frett" (l. 79) - all elements deeply rooted in tradition. Yet, the aspect that pulls this lyric out of the wells of convention is the speaker. The poem is spoken by the soul of Edward:

"And I, latte Edward, that dyd excelle,/ Ecce nunc in puluere dormio" (11. 83-84). The poet employs a personal perspective, a real example from which to expound his admonitions. Unlike the lyrics of Maximian and Middlelerd, the voice of the poet never enters to judge Edward's life, but the poet allows Edward himself to recognize and lament his errors:

> I ly now in mowlde as it ys naturall,
> ffore erthe vnto erthe hath his Reverture
> What ordeyned god to be terrestyall
> Wyth Recourse off erthly nature.
> Euyre ffor-to lyve who may be sure?
> What is hit to trust the mutabilite
> Off this world whan no thyng may endure?
> I am now gon wych latt was in prosperite
> To presumen there vpon hit ys butt vanite (11. 13-21)

Edward "pleyd [his] pagent" and now it is over. Two hundred years later Shakespeare will employ this metaphor often when speaking of life and death. In this poem, death itself is only mentioned once, for "deth apperith" (1. 88). The concentration of Edward's account is on his life and the way he could have better lived. Edward's concern for being remembered after death is also a new fifteenth-century element.

> I had Inogthe, I hyld nott me content,
> With-outt Remembraunce that I schuld
> More to encrysse was myne entent. (11. 49-51)

He conquered and achieved great things during his life in order that his name be lauded on Earth, yet he unfortunately lost sense of the spiritual whole of man's existence. This lyric shows man's heightened desire to construct his life around the intention of impressing a worldly identity.

In the lyric "Farewell, This World is But a Cherry Fair," the persona also is a dead man addressing humanity on the

futility of this "febyl world, so fals and so vnstable" (Brown, 15th C. Lyrics, 236, l. 22). He judges his own soul's predicament and acknowledges his personal "trespaces." He, like Edward, was a king, and he now realizes that the acquired riches and personal attributes that he once proudly worshipped cannot give him the security to outwit Death. Death triumphs over his opponents, even kings, in all games.

> Ffare well, this world! I take my leve for evere,
> I am arested to apere at goddes face.
>
> ...
>
> This lyfe, I see, is but a cheyre fayre;
> All thyngis passene and so most I algate.
> To-day I sat full ryall in a cheyere,
> Tyll sotell deth knokyd at my gate,
> And on-avysed he seyd to me, chek-mate!
> lo! how sotell he maketh a devors -
> and wormys to fede, he hath here leyd my cors!
> (ll. 1-2, 8-14)

The tone is reminiscent of many thirteenth-century lyrics, for death is a sly and subtle force which comes to each man's gate and knocks on each man's door. The lyric is novel in its perspective, for the persona admonishes as one who once valued the world's fruits: "I sey no more but be ware of any horne!" (l. 21). The overall effect of moralization from a dying man's perspective is realism and immediacy.

This infusion of drama into moralization can be seen vividly in "A Mirror for Young Ladies at Their Toilet." The speaker in this fifteenth-century lyric is the mirror into which a beautiful girl vainly gazes. The mirror faces two ways as it simultaneously reflects the girl's present sins and the fate of her soul. It disdainfully denounces her vanity:

> Maist thou now be glade, with all thi fresshe aray,
> On me to loke that wyll dystene this face,
> ...
> O maset wriche, I marke the with my mace.
> Lyfte vp thy ieye, be-holde now, and assay! (Brown, 15th C. Lyrics, 241, ll. 1-2, 6-7)

Yet, the persona beseeches the girl to flee from "synne," to save herself. In most fourteenth-century exhortations, Death is the hostile entity threatening to slay men. In this lyric, however, her vanity will kill her much as greed kills the three rioters seeking to conquer Death in Chaucer's "Pardoner's Tale." The mirror speaks as the voice of Sin:

> Yche loke one me aught to put þe in affray;
> I wyll not spare the, for thou arte my pray.
> Take hede, and turne fro synne while þu hast space.
> O þoughte, welthe heele to this, thaught þe say nay.
> Me tyme muste nedis comme as I manace;
> Be lengthe one lyfe may lepe out of my lace.
> I smyte, I sle, I woll graunte no mane grace.
> A-ryse! a-wake! amend here while thou may. (ll. 8-15)

The mirror itself is the "manace" which will freeze the image of this moment of vanity, and this deadly sin will be her end. In earlier lyrics, Death "comeþ so baldely to pyke his pray." Here, it is her own sin which will be her predator and greatest enemy. This lyric exemplifies an attempt to deal with the intimate relationship between the inner psychology of an individual and the actual death awaiting him. The visual representations of this period similarly try to connect Death with the man he comes to. Death is the embodiment or reflection of the internal nature of the person behind whom he stalks. Hans Holbein portrays Death as a skeleton bearing some

attribute that alludes to the particular moral standing of the human he takes (Figures 11-17). Thus, one sees the return to seeing Sin, instead of Death, as man's killer, for now moral law is the mediator between man and God. Death no longer seems to be the external, unnatural, invisible enemy found during the Black Death, but rather it is the natural follower of Sin. Sin should be feared and avoided, not Death. The responsibility, thus, lies with the individual as death is a personal mirror for every man (Figure 19).

One of the most important products of the more personal tones towards death, the tendancy to write from an "experienced" perspective, and the closer bond between man and his world was the appearance of elegies. The fifteenth-century lyric "On the Untimely Death of a Fair Lady" is one of the most personal medieval elegies in the English language (Brown, 15th C. Lyrics, 339). The poet laments the premature death of his beloved. He lashes out bitterly against Death as the raging leveller of the fourteenth century:

> Ha! cruell deeth, contrarious to creatures in kynde.
> Ha! deeth dispitous , who may aduertise
> Thi mourther, thi malice who may have in mynde?
> Thi myschief that to mankind þu dost exercise,
> Thi rigur, þi rancur, who may devyse? (241, ll. 1-5)

Death is concrete, premeditative, and hostile. He is "hideous to be-holde," a "pirate," an "insaciable malice," and "lusty in game." He is a lecherous thief, for "ladies likyng [he] sleest out of seson" (l. 17). Yet, although wanting to personally "destruye cruell deeth," he realizes:

> ... symple is þi sawe,
> ffore deeth universelly the worlde shal vengyse.
> So ys the tyraunt tytled to that victorie
> By adam, the alderman of old auncetrie. (ll. 25-28)

Death triumphs by the right granted to him by man's fall.

The poet expresses his grief, then concludes with a prayer:

> Then sorwed I, that sentence recouered by assyse,
> And mourned for my maystresse, here marred in molde.
> ... deeth, thu mayst agrise
> To repress so noble so gentill a creature
> In tendir age vntymely, agayn the ordre of nature.
> O myghty lord, was goodnesse neuer schal fynyse,
> Have mercy on the soule of my dere maistresse! (ll. 29-30, 33-37)

As in the lyrics during the Black Death, Death is malign and cruel. One sees that those deaths which come too soon or "against the order of nature" spur the strongest resentment and remorse.

The anonymous late fourteenth-century poem Pearl, an important work with elegiac qualities, deals with the spiritual - "gostly" - dilemma death creates. Upon the death of his child, the embittered father at first can only understand the resurrective aspect of her death in physical terms. As a human, he sees only the end of her worldly, corporeal being. He compares her to a transient flower which blossoms and too quickly returns to the earth:

> For that thou lestes was bot a rose
> That flowred and fayled as kynde hyt gef. (13, ll. 269-70)

Only when he fights his emotional reaction and begins to reason the death as a Christian can he find consolation. A Christian voice advises:

Find thy lures of lyghtly fleme;
For, marre other madde, morne, and mythe,
Al lys in hym to dyght and deme. (11. 358-360)

[And quickly drive away your sorrows. For, whether you lament and rage, or mourn and conceal your feelings, everything lies with Him to ordain and decree.]

The father then has a vision of his child's soul processing with 144,000 maidens in the light of Heaven. Immediately after her death, he deals with the loss in terms of a valuable pearl, a physical object, that has vanished somewhere in the garden, for he can only conceive of her death in a physical sense. Through the Christian faith, however, he envisions her soul as one of God's precious pearls adorning the raiments of Heaven. His sorrow turns to happiness: "So wel is me in thys doel-doungoun" (l. 1187). He accepts the death and commends the pearl to God. Consolation and joy can never come to a mourner if he neglects the spiritual aspect of death, for only in relation to God does death have meaning and purpose. In the end he rejoices over her death, for she will remain an eternal servant of God and a pearl for His delight.

Over this hyul this lote I laghte,
For pyty of my perle enclyin,
And sythen to God I hit bytaghte
In krystes dere blessyng and myn,
That in the forme of bred and myn
That preste uus schewes uch a daye.
He gef uus to be his homly hyn
Ande precious perles unto his pay. (11. 1529-36)

Thus, death is a transcendence. When a man dies, he is not becoming lost in a base mound of earth, but rather he is making himself a gift to God.

The Christian approach to death triumphs in both of these elegies. Man's immediate reaction to death is one of bitterness and outrage, and he yearns to retaliate against the cruel Death who steals his loved ones. Only a Christian understanding of death as an advantageous step to a higher spirituality can console him. All of the literature studied thus far expresses the difficulty of maintaining a Christian attitude in the face of death. Man finds it difficult to suppress his human response to loss. Yet, he must not forget his dead or dying friend's fortune to be closer to God. A Christian man lives to learn how to die; thus, the moment of death is one at which man should be "gloryous glade" as the author of Pearl concludes.

In the fifteenth century, the Church implemented a large number of practical, instructional manuals to aid men in learning how to die. The "crafte of dyinge" included such manuals as L'Art de bien mourrir, L'Art de bien vivre, La Science de bien mourrir, and Stimulus timiens Dei ad bene moriendum, and they were to be read by the moriens and his audience so that he may die an honorable Christian death. The sudden surge of these texts can be explained in several ways. First, the Church sought to maintain its authority by keeping the spirit of moralization alive in medieval minds. Second, as mentioned before, God the Judge was now God the Upholder of Morality; thus, the confirmation of a moral life before death was crucial. (Beaty, 69) These texts re-emphasized the traditional importance of focusing on the crucial moment of absolution before death.

They venerated a courageous confrontation with death. Reflecting the tensions of humanism, the character of Death is presented as an awkward combination of the popular and ecclesiastical conceptions of death, for one can see in his character the fourteenth-century raging leveller and the Christian reminder of the soul's fate.

The Tractatus, ars bene moriendi, published between 1414 and 1418, was the original text and the only one to be translated into English (Beaty, 2). The Boke of the Crafte of Dyinge became one of the most widely read works in fifteenth-century England. The underlying assumption in the manual is that death is dreadful and repulsive; as a result, its purpose is to instruct Moriens, the dying Everyman, on the transcendental nature of death, on the inevitability of death, and on the way his reason should govern emotions. The Crafte begins:

> Forasmuch as the passage of death of the wretchedness of the exile of this world, for uncunning of dying - not only to lewd men but also to religious and devout persons - seemeth wonderfully hard and perilous, and also right fearful and horrible; therefore, in this present matter and treatise that is of the Craft of Dying, is drawn and contained a short manner of exhortation for teaching and comforting of them that be in point of death. (Comper, 3)

Six chapters and eleven woodcut illustrations constitute The Crafte, and they span the moments before the individual's death until the moments after, when the soul is in Purgatory (Figures 20-30). The first chapter exhorts Moriens to grasp the importance of learning to die, its spiritual significance.

Chapter two is quite dramatic as Moriens, left alone in the death-chamber, must combat the five superior temptations which successively attack him - Unbelief (the most deadly), Despair, Impatience, Spiritual Pride, and Avarice. Faith is Moriens's only weapon, and its strength is tested in order to confirm a truly good death. Once the temptations have died, the accompanying priest interrogates Moriens:

> Be ye glad that ye shall die in
> Christian belief? Let him answer: Yes.
>
> Know thee that ye hath not so well
> lived as ye should? Yea. (97)

Moriens, then goes on in the next chapter to confess further in a series of prayers as he is still assumed to be in control of his reason. He holds a cross before his eyes in order to concentrate on the Christ-like exit he must emulate. The last two chapters address the friends surrounding the death-bed, for Moriens is now unconscious. The priests and friends who are present play a vital role as they must keep Moriens in a penitential spirit in order that he "die well;" they must pray for his soul in Purgatory, and they must see the significance of this experience in terms of their own souls, for the whole drama is in itself a memento mori. The manual concludes on a triumphant note as Moriens's soul is liberated from his mouth having been purified through absolution, and there is a tone of hope that his soul rests among the elect.

The larger purpose is seen in the contradictions in the character of God and Moriens. God is both the strict judge and the

benevolent distributor of mercy, and Moriens is at the same time both clumsy and child-like, extremely pious and self-assured (Beaty, 29). The tone of The Crafte is, consequently, both consolatory and threatening. The idea behind the manual is to urge the comfort of death and to eschew fear as part of a "good" passage, and it does so through a combination of these tones. Although the manual portrays Death as a synthesis of the leveller who is "swift perishing the members" (Comper, 118) and the natural force which comes to knock on each individual's door, Death is unambiguously accentuated as a comfort, a spiritual beginning, a "going out of prison, and an ending of exile" (6).

The fifteenth-century play contributing most to the formation of The Crafte is Everyman. Comper notes in the Introduction to The Crafte:

> It is worth reading the two together to see how the play has helped to shape the treatise, and yet how much less crude, and finer in thought is the latter. (xl)

The attitude towards death is the same in both works, for they present the moment of death as a battle between Christian virtues and worldly vices. Everyman faces a crucial challenge in fighting the sorrowful realization that his earthly possessions were all in vain. Everyman fears death, yet, like Moriens, his faith and penitence allow him to triumph over death.

God sends Death to Everyman abruptly. As in The Crafte, Death can be seen as the slaying leveller who "giveth no warnyng"

and as the gracious savior. As the leveller, Death speaks:

> Lord, I will in the world go run overall,
> And cruelly outsearch both great and small.
> ...
> He that loveth riches I will strike with my dart.
> (209, ll. 72-73, 76)

Death is an absolute. His speech mirrors his certainty as he speaks explicitly and sharply. Death is straightforward and there are no exceptions to his work:

> I am Death, that no man dreadeth
> For every man I rest, and no man spareth,
> For it is God's commandment
> That all to me should be obedient. (210, ll. 115-19)

Everyman despairs and "weeps with sighs deep" upon the arrival of unexpected Death, and his first reaction is to offer Death a bribe to "defer this matter till another day" (l. 124). Death informs Everyman that life's possessions were merely lent, not given, to him. When Everyman finally realizes that he must die, he still does not quite understand the spiritual significance of his death. He entreats friends to accompany him on this long journey. First, Fellowship refuses to suffer with him, then Kindred and Cousin forsake him. Each man must undergo death alone. Next, Everyman beseeches the deceitful Goods, his most beloved possession, to join him, but Goods complains that he is "too brittle" and "may not endure." Thus, Everyman can depend on nothing outside of himself to accompany him to the grave. He is left to himself to find consolation. Good Deeds "lie cold in the ground," for Everyman's "sins hath him sore bound" (l. 488). Knowledge, then, arrives to lead Everyman to confession.

Notice that these allegorical qualities arrive in the same sequence as the occurrances in The Crafte. Moriens absolves himself of worldly temptations and undergoes confession to confirm his understanding of the significance of a "good death." Confession grants Everyman the gift of penance so that he may be absolved of all guilt before death. Good Deeds reawakens upon the completion of penance. Beauty, Strength, Discretion, and Five Wits urge Everyman to accept the last rites, and they closely follow him to the grave. Yet, they all forsake him at that crucial moment, except for Good Deeds. Everyman's good deeds will be his gift of charitable deeds that he will offer to God. Everyman's last words echo those of Christ: "Into thy hands, Lord, my soul I commend" (l. 880). Everyman and Moriens both triumph over Death after a harsh and grueling confrontation with the Christian truths about life and death.

The Crafte and Everyman reveal the transitional period that the conception of death was in at this time. Death speaks as a king in Everyman with threatening and abrupt tones, yet Everyman's "good death" at the end creates tones of veneration for a comforting, joyous death. Death as a worldly reality and a concrete character is only a part of the concept. The allegorical form itself of Everyman is evidence that there is a new tendency to treat death philosophically. Although the lesson for Moriens and Everyman is traditional, the presentation of the battle each man faces and his various speculations about death's significance is new. The impact of the Renaissance explains

these texts' two most radical breaks with tradition: 1) the changing view of death as a fact to death as an idea (though, as mentioned before, the change is often not clear-cut, but rather a fusion of the two), and 2) the shift of focus from the moriens to the vivens; that is, the evaluation of the dying person's soul by his sociological and personal constitution (Beaty, 69) Later in the Renaissance Death was no longer a fact that ruled and controlled man, but rather an idea that man could control philosophically. An example of this more abstract conception of Death can be seen in Père Gratray's dialogue between a Master and his Disciple on the subject of death. The Master expounds the Christian view:

> Death is then the supreme process of life, since it delivers up the soul to God. It annihilates distance, the difference between its real and its ideal condition. In one sense it projects life from the finite to the infinite, not as if our created life could ever become infinite, but in the sense that death reunites to its infinite source, and it renders it established, full, and eternal.
>
> So that the hideous dissolution of the body, and disappearance of the whole man which is called death, is in fact the annihilating of the obstacle that separated the real from the ideal life in God....
>
> Death, then, is no longer that imcomprehensible enemy, that frightful phantom that the senses see in it. Death when well considered is for the real life of man what... for the life of the world is the true religion, and the working of the God Man, Who unites heaven and earth. (Beaty, xxviii)

Beaty explains this conceptual change as an inevitable change necessitated by the stagnant fields of literature and art.

Because the medieval mind conceived of such a rigid, vivid, and factual otherworld, the conventional and predetermined portrayals of abstractions began to paralyze artistic creativity. Humanists liberated the intellect from the medieval chains; thus, as mentioned in reference to the personal tones in the lyrics, art and literature acquired deeper, more complex, and more philosophical dimensions. Beaty, also, explains the philosophical emphasis on death as a way for men to mollify the blow of death and to make such a challenge as presented in The Crafte easier. Although entirely within a Christian context, the new view of death reflects a disdain for the tyrannical ecclesiastics who dictated definitions of Right, Wrong, Saved, and Damned. Just as Hell and Purgatory lose their Dantesque freshness and immediacy, Death loses its concreteness. This phenomenon, however, occurs only in the intellectual circles at first.

The significance of this move towards a more abstract death is monumental. As a concept becomes more abstract, the concept relies more heavily on the involvement of the individual in relation to it. For example, a concrete fact is impersonal and exists regardless of personal view about it. An abstraction, on the other hand, is sustained by the varying individual views and its meaning remains dependent on interpretation. It is, thus, inevitably nebulous and fragile. One sees the beginnings of this movement away from a concrete Death in the fifteenth-century lyrics and the later ecclesiastical moral literature. In these examples

so much depends upon Death's relationship to the moral and psychological make-up of the dying person.

The triumphant, absolute Death who pronounces "ego sum" can, nevertheless, be seen to exist regardless of the changing conception of death in the fifteenth century. The key to the change lies in the degree of intimacy between man and his death. Death is as much a part of man as his Good Deeds are, for a life loses its meaning without an impending death to accompany it. The movements from death as a thirteenth-century transcendental force to a fifteenth-century dramatic character, and from death as a fact to death as an idea reflect man's continual attempt to define a relationship between himself and death. The movements further reflect the changes in the medieval religious conceptions and temperament. The thirteenth-century conception of an afterlife, of God the Judge, and of a transcendental and cunning death explains the pervading sentiment of dread in the early lyrics and the loyalty to the Church. The fourteenth-century creation of a concrete character was actually the creation of an external and tangible target at which man could aim his hostility. The increasing sense of familiarity with death then led men to elaborate on his character, to give him life, by instilling into him a spirit of drama. However, as man became more attached to his world and his identity, death became a personal mirror for each man's moral and psychological constitution. The concept of death was pushed into philosophical dimensions under the Renaissance emphasis

on the dignity of man and man's ability to take control of fact by philosophizing. Death actually never loses his character, but it becomes incorporated into extremely traditional and conventional Christian contexts as seen in Everyman.

The best way to explain the overall change in the conception of death from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century is to refer to two visual examples. If a thirteenth-century medieval artist were told to paint a representation of death and the spiritual consequences of earthly vanity, he would depict the scene of Judgment Day (Figure 1), or maybe he would present an array of memento mori such as skulls, coffins, and serpents. If a fifteenth-century artist were given the same orders, he would paint a horrifying and graphic personification of death (Figures 6-8). A later fifteenth-century or Renaissance ecclesiastic would neither paint Death nor employ memento mori, but rather he would treat death as an abstract idea, a subject of reflection and discussion. All of the deviations on the theme of death can, however, be condensed into two overriding trends which persist throughout the Middle Ages: a shift in man's focus from the "after" to the "before" death, and the more intimate relationship between the individual and his world and, consequently, the individual and death.

CONCLUSION

Death has always been a fearful and unpleasant experience for man, whether it be his death or the death of those near him. It is difficult for man to accept his physical ending as the body is so much a part of his being. His Beauty and Strength and Five Wits define him and distinguish him from the rest of humanity. Medieval Christianity taught men to disregard physical death and to be concerned with spiritual death, for man's ability to reason distinguishes him from the animals and he can combat the harshness of death by applying the tool of reason. Nevertheless, the acceptance of death is difficult for man. If man employs his reason with the utmost strength, he can triumph over death stoically; yet, more often death's blows strike irrationally and unnaturally and man's emotions burst into fury at Death. Even when death does come naturally as in old age or a natural heart-attack, man finds the Stoic approach "inhuman." For, as Elisabeth Kübler-Ross explains in On Death and Dying:

> In simple terms, in our conscious mind we can only be killed; it is inconceivable to die of a natural cause or of old age. Therefore, death in itself is associated with a bad act, a frightening happening, something that in itself calls for retribution and punishment. (2)

Kübler-Ross points out that, while modern man attempts to

euphemize death, the Middle Ages did not. This idea is true to an extent, but many of the assertions and reassertions of the Christian attitude towards death can also be seen as a medieval attempt to create a system under which the impact of death could be softened. In addressing death overtly and illustrating his stark reality on Earth, men hoped, paradoxically, to make it seem more natural and familiar to speak about. In this sense they were trying to euphemize death.

Kübler-Ross is, however, correct in asserting that death today is "more lonely, mechanical, and dehumanized" (8), for as one sees in the medieval literature, Death was given a dramatic character and the moment itself was a communal experience. Death had a specific purpose as a memento mori from God, and if sent to gather one man, he was also sent to instruct that man's friends on life's irony. The difference between the medieval and the modern relationship with death is that medieval man was much more familiar with death and he sensed his impotence against it. He felt helpless against earthquakes, famine, and disease, and war as all were God's vengence against sinful man. Today, a sense of invincibility shields modern man. He does not see death often enough to have to fight it or evade it, for death today is extremely clinical. He fights to perpetuate life on earth, while medieval man sought eternal salvation. Each of these attitudes towards death results from the degree to which man senses his end. Modern man senses less of a threat not because the

world is less hostile to him, but because he does not sense the overriding moral judge and punisher that medieval man sensed in God.

Although a force of "nature" like the Black Death is unlikely to ever again strike the world to such a destructive extent, modern man is not free from impending death. For instance, death is "pending" in the twentieth century if one considers the threat of nuclear war. Jonathan Schell's The Fate of the Earth serves itself as a modern adaptation of the memento mori from its thirteenth-century form in which death is more of a vague, pervading force. Schell urgently appeals to man to combat death in assuming an anti-nuclear stance. He wants his readers to take control over their fates by taking a moral stance, an idea which the medieval Church was constantly trying to convey. Schell's theme resembles Chaucer's in "The Pardoner's Tale," for through man's indifference to war, a sin as deadly to modern man as avarice was to the three rioters, we will ironically find and create our own deaths. Schell adopts a thirteenth-century tactic in urging his audience to take action, to take the "right" stance in determining one's fate. He further illustrates the medieval tactic of emphasizing the illusory nature of the world to achieve his end.

> In its apparent durability, a world menaced with imminent doom is in a way deceptive. It is almost an illusion. Now we are sitting at the breakfast table drinking our coffee and reading the newspaper, but in a moment we may be inside a fireball whose temperature is tens of thousands of degrees. Now we are on our way to work, walking through

> the city streets, but in a moment
> we may be standing on an empty plain
> under a darkened sky looking for the
> charred remnants of our children.
> Now we are alive, but in a moment
> we may be dead. Now there is human
> life on earth, but in a moment it
> may be gone.

These tones of impending doom reverberate throughout medieval lyrics, particularly in their refrains:

> þis world...
> For nou hit is and nou hit nis.

Or,

> Nou be we on bench, nou be we on bere.

And,

> Also, it ner here, y-wis.
> That many men, seyth, sooth it is-
> Al goth, but Goddes wille;
> Alle we shullen die.

Unfortunately, we express today a fear for the fate of the Earth whereas the thirteenth century only began to hint at a "drede" for the fate of the individual more than for the fate of the soul.

APPENDIX

OF

ILLUSTRATIONS

FIGURE 1

2. — PISE (Musée National). *Triomphe de la Mort* (détail). Partie droite : La Mort, la vie mondaine et la lutte des anges avec les diables.
(*Photo Anderson.*)

II

FIGURE 2

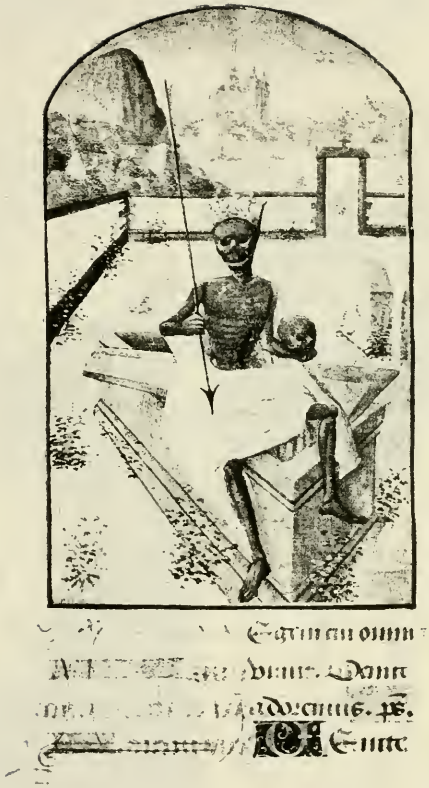
179. Death leaping from Hell on his charger with arrow and coffin, to claim his rights over mortals. From *Le grant kalendrier*, printed by Nicolas le Rouge, Troyes, 1496.

FIGURE 3

5. — J. SAVONAROLE, *Predica dell'arte del bène morire.* (Florence, vers 1497.) *B.N.P.*, Rés. D. 9796, frontispice.

(*Photo Bibl. Nat., Dépt des Imprimés, Réserve.*)

FIGURE 4



8. — LIVRE D'HEURES, à l'usage de Rome (écriture et décoration françaises, 2e moitié du XVe siècle. LA MORT-ROI. *B.N.P.*, ms. lat. 1160, fol. 151 recto.

(*Photo Bibl. Nat. Dép^t des Manuscrits.*)

VIII

FIGURE 5

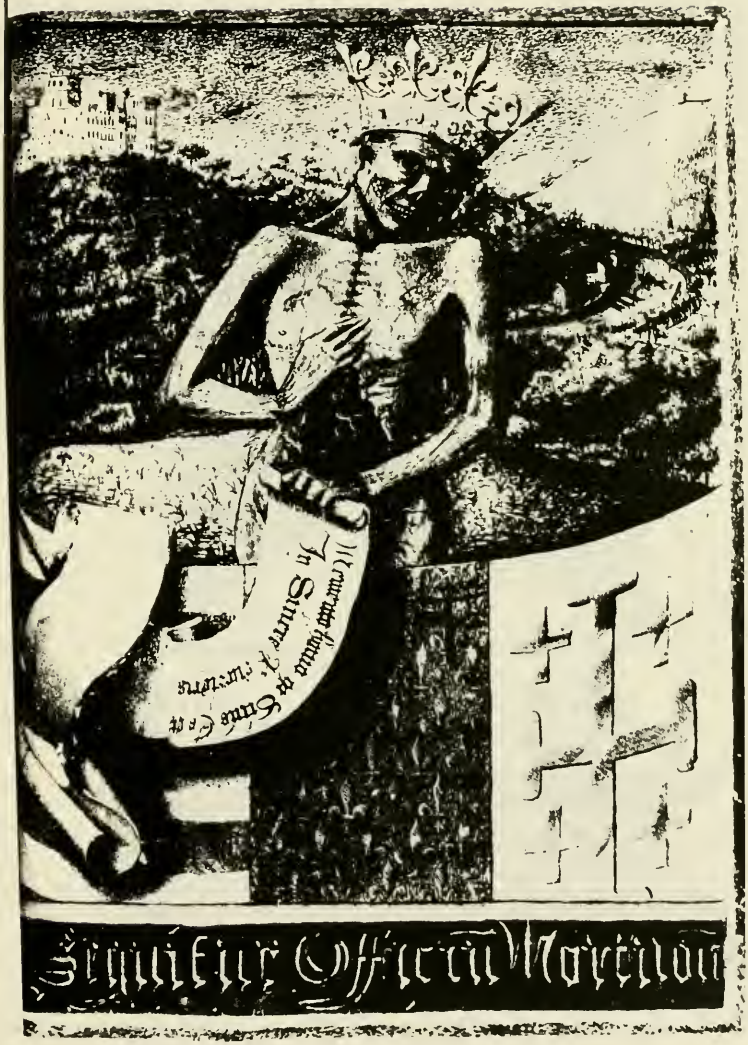
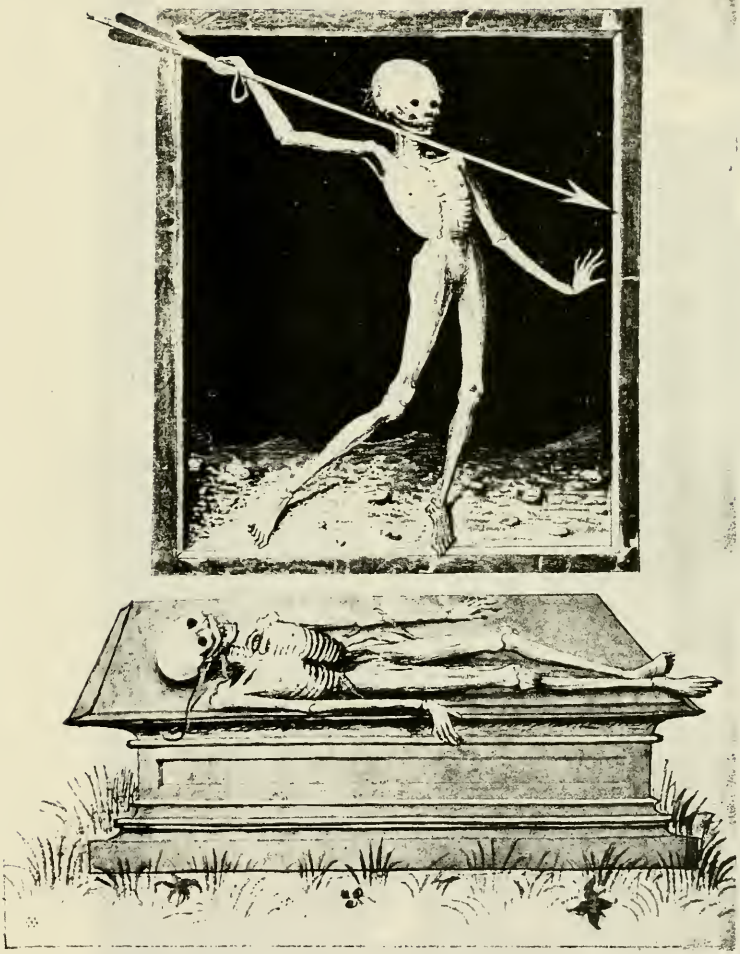


FIGURE 6



9. — LIVRE D'HEURES, à l'usage de Paris (2 moitié du XV^e^ siècle). LA MORT, *B.N.P.*, ms. lat. 10548, fol. 131 verso. (*Photo Bibl. Nat. Dép^t^ des Manuscrits.*)

IX

FIGURE 7

10. – STRASBOURG (Musée de Notre-Dame) : LA MORT. Fin du XV^e^ siècle (atelier de Memling.) (*Photo Musée de Strasbourg.*)

X

FIGURE 8

Questa cogitatione della morte hanno hauuta tucti li sancti
huomini & sancte donne : & in ogni opera che e fanno, / tucta

18. — J. SAVONAROLE, *Predica dell'arte del bene morire* (Florence, vers 1497). *B.N.P.*, Rés. D. 9796, fol. Evi *recto*. LA MORT ET LA VIE.

(Photo Bibl. Nat. Dép^t^ des Imprimés, Réserve.)

FIGURE 9

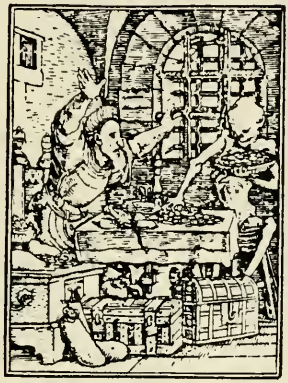
Septima etas mūdi CCLXIIII
Imago mortis
Morte nihil melius. vita nil peius iniqua
O prima mors boim. reges eterna laboriū
Tu senile iugum domino volente relaxas
Vinctoriūq graues adimis ceruice catenas
Exiliumq leuas. t carceris hostia frangis
Eripis indignis. iusti bona pabus equans
Atq immota manes. nulla exorabilis ame
A primo prefixa die. tu cuncta quieto
Ferre iubes animo. promisso fine laborum
Te sine supplicium. vita est carcer perennis

146. Orchestra of the dead. Woodcut by Michael Wolgemut, from Hartmann Schedel's *Liber Chronicarum*, printed by Anton Koberger, Nuremberg, 1493.

FIGURE 10

THE MISER

Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided? *Luke xii, 20.*



This very night shalt thou know Death!
To-morrow be encoffined fast!
Then tell me, fool! while thou hast breath,
Who'll have the gold thou hast amassed?

FIGURE 11

THE OLD WOMAN

Death is better than a bitter life or continued sickness. *Ecclesiasticus xxx, 17.*

The love of life has ceased in thee,
Who long hast known this suffering strife;
Then come along to rest with me,
For Death is better now than life.

FIGURE 13

Knowest thou it because thou wast then born? or because the number of thy days is great? *Job xxxviii, 21.*

Thou tell'st by amphibology
That which to others shall befall,
Then tell me by astrology
When *thou* shalt answer to my call.

FIGURE 12

THE MONK

Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction. *Psalm cvii, 10.*

Thou who hast never felt remorse nor care,
Beyond the craft of thy mendicity,
Within the shades of death I now will bear,
To save thee from such base necessity.

FIGURE 14

THE KING

And he that is to-day a king, to-morrow shall die.
Ecclesiasticus x, 10.

He who to-day is yet a king,
To-morrow shall entombèd be,
Nor carry with him anything
Of all his transient royalty.

FIGURE 15

BONES OF ALL MEN

Woe! woe! woe! to the inhabiters of earth. *Revelation viii, 13.*

All in whose nostrils was the breath of life . . . died.
Genesis vii, 22.

Woe! woe! inhabitants of Earth,
Where blighting cares so keenly strike,
And, spite of rank, or wealth, or worth,
Death—Death will visit all alike.

FIGURE 16

THE ESCUTCHEON OF DEATH

Remember the end, and thou shalt never do amiss.
Ecclesiasticus vii, 36.

If you would lead a sinless life,
Then keep this scene in constant view,
And you will have no toil or strife
When long repose has come for you.

FIGURE 17

. Allegoric representation of Death. From *Le grant kalendrier et compost des Bergiers*, printed by Nicolas le Rouge, Troyes, 1496.

FIGURE 18

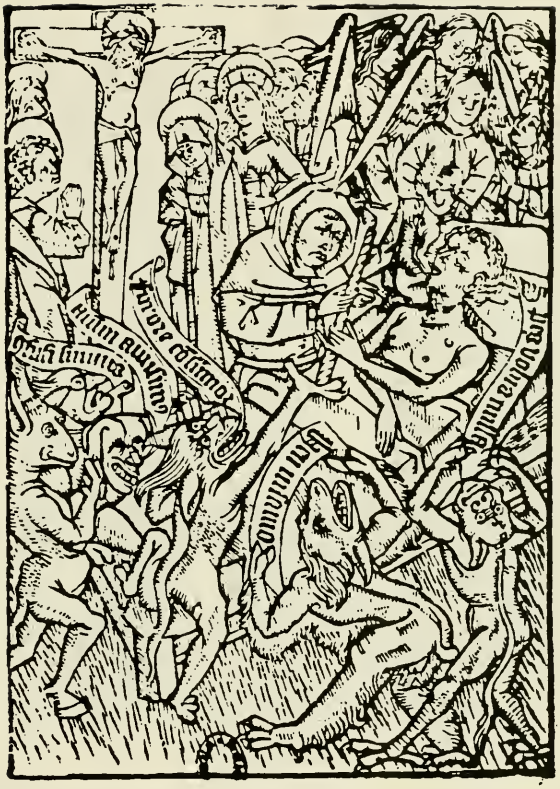
O that they were Wiſe, *that they underſtood* This, *that they would* Conſider *their latter* End! *Deut. 32. 29*

——— MORS ſola fatetur
Quantula ſint hominum corpuſcula. ——— *Iuvenal.*

FIGURE 19

[fol. Aiii *verso*] En haut à gauche, un diable suspendu en l'air s'exprime à l'aide d'une banderolle : *Infernus factus est*; à ses côtés un autre démon ajoute : *Fac sicut pagani* : ils veulent persuader au malade que l'enfer n'existe pas. En bas et à droite, un diable à bec d'oiseau montrant un jeune homme qui serre un couteau dit : *Interficias te ipsum*. Un quatrième démon s'est installé au chevet du malade. Derrière son lit : Dieu le Père, le Fils et la Vierge.

FIGURE 20



[fol. Cvii *verso*] La bonne mort. Un moine place un cierge dans la main du fidèle et un ange prend l'âme qui sort de sa bouche; au fond, le Christ en croix, adoré par la Vierge et les saints. Autour du lit, les diables crient leur rage : *Confusi sumus : Animam amisimus : Furore consumor : Heu insanio : Spes nobis nulla;* on reconnaît plusieurs monstres déjà présents dans les scènes précédentes.

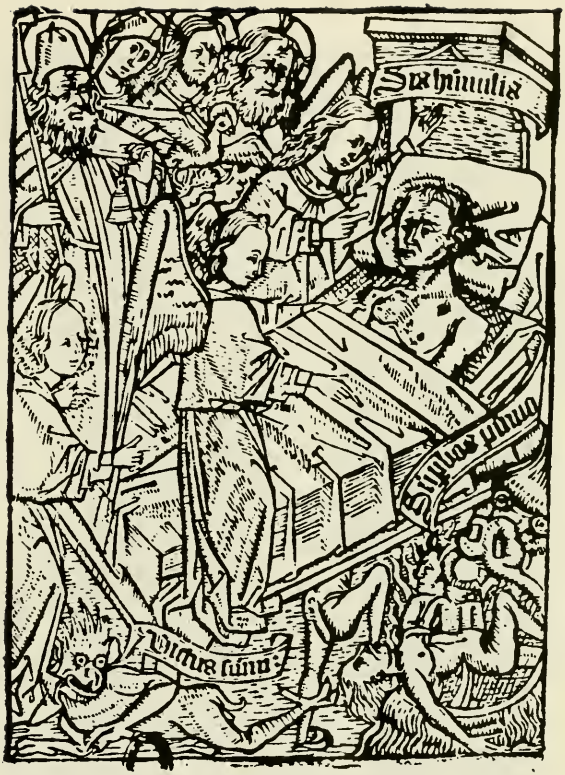
FIGURE 21

[fol. Cv *verso*] Autour du fidèle, la Vierge, le Christ en croix doublé du bon pasteur et de ses brebis; un ange disant : *Non sis avarus*. Une jeune femme exhorte le malade : *Intendas amicis*, et montre un ange qui protège sa famille. Un diable assis par terre, ouvrant une bouche de poisson, se demande : *Quid faciam?*

FIGURE 22

[fol. Ciii *verso*] Un démon ailé et coiffé d'un bonnet de juif suggère : *Provideas amicis*. La gravure porte une tache sur la poitrine d'un des personnages, le juif, que le diable montre au mourant. Deux autres démons rappellent au malade ses biens; l'un d'eux lui dit : *Intende thesauro*.

FIGURE 23



[fol. Ci *verso*] Trois anges, le premier disant au malade : *Sis humilis*, et les deux autres montrant la gueule de Lucifer qui broie plusieurs âmes et dit : *Superbos punio*. Derrière les anges, Dieu le Père, le Fils, le Saint-Esprit, la Vierge, un saint. Sur le sol un démon abattu avoue : *Victus sum*.

FIGURE 24

[fol. Bvii *verso*] Cinq diables entourent le mourant, lui offrant de riches couronnes, et lui rappelant ses mérites : *Tu es firmus in fide : Gloriare : Coronam meruisti : Exalta te ipsum : In paciencia perseverasti ;* le deuxième a des feuilles acérées en guise de cheveux, le dernier une seconde tête à la place du ventre. Un peu à l'écart, Dieu le Père montre les âmes qu'il accueille dans son sein, avec le Fils, la Vierge et les bienheureux.

FIGURE 25

[fol. Bv *verso*] Autour du lit : Jésus avec des instruments de sa Passion, Dieu le Père avec le dard de la mort, des saints et des saintes, un ange. Les démons sont battus; l'un s'enfuit sous le lit disant : *Sum captivatus*, l'autre, renversé, s'écrie : *Labores amisi*.

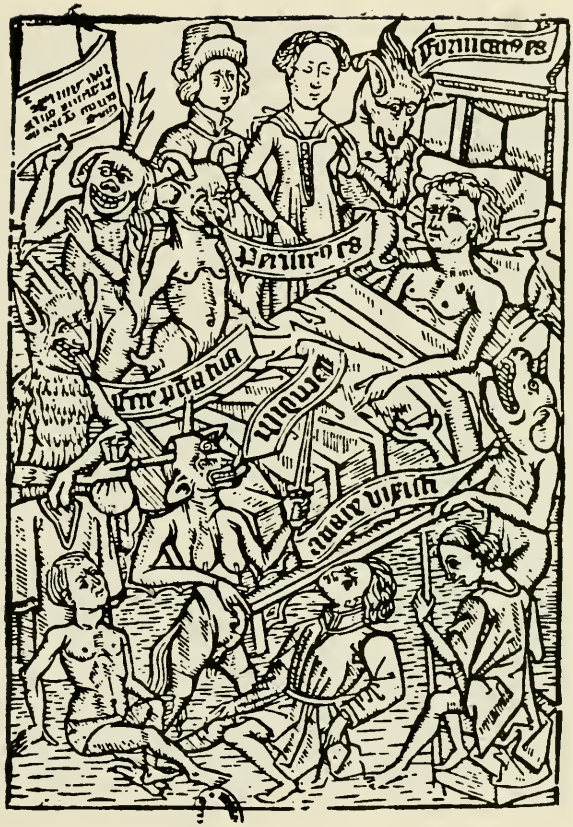
FIGURE 26

[fol. Biii *verso*] Un démon ailé souffle du sommet du lit : *Ecce quantam penam pateris ;* le malade l'écoute et réagit en donnant un coup de pied à l'un de ses assistants; la servante est désemparée, une table se renverse, un diable dans le coin triomphe : *Quam bene decepi eum.*

FIGURE 27

[fol. Bi *verso*] A côté du mourant : Saint-Pierre, avec le coq du parjure et la clef du royaume des cieux; la Madeleine, tenant une urne à parfum. Au pied du lit, le bon larron et un ange qui, indiquant un juif tombé de cheval, dit : *Nequaquam desperes ;* il s'agit en effet de saint Paul. Un démon enrage : *Victoria mihi nulla ;* un autre s'est caché sous le lit, mais on voit encore ses pattes de derrière.

FIGURE 28



[*fol.* Avii *verso*] Six diables autour du lit : le premier, à tête de cheval, montre au malade la femme avec qui il a péché : *Fornicatus es ;* le deuxième lève la main comme s'il jurait et rappelle : *Periurus es.* Sur la tête du troisième, qui arbore une pancarte illisible, croît une chevelure végétale, tandis que le quatrième semble endosser une armure, et dit : *Ecce peccata tua.* Le cinquième, à corps de femme et tête d'animal, montre une épée : *Occidisti ;* le dernier tend la main comme un mendiant et reproche : *Avare viristi.*

FIGURE 29

[fol. Av *verso*] A côté du lit : Moïse, Dieu le Père, le Fils, la Vierge et, derrière eux, une foule de saints; le Saint-Esprit au-dessus de la tête du mourant. Au milieu de la scène, un ange admoneste : *Sta firmus in fide*. Trois démons s'enfuient : le premier, à la tête de chien, dit : *Victi sumus*; le deuxième, mi-loup mi-poisson, se désespère : *Frustra laboravimus*; le troisième conclut : *Fugiamus*.

FIGURE 30

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